

Work Session of the Common Council
Of the City of Plattsburgh, New York
January 23rd, 2014, 5:00PM

Present: Councilors Rachelle Armstrong (W1), Mike Kelly (W2), Dale Dowdle (W3), Paul O'Connell (W4), Becky Kasper (W5), Joshua Kretser (W6)

Absent: Mayor James Calnon

Amy Bonn was introduced as a consultant brought in to facilitate discussion of community development. Acting as Mayor Pro Tem, Rachelle Armstrong postponed that discussion in order for the Council to consider whether action would be taken to change the policy on street drives.

Street Drives:

Councilors Kretser and Dowdle remarked that groups seeking street drive slots should also be seeking alternate forms of fundraising and that the requests should not be a desperate plea.

Councilor Kasper remarked that the policy should be maintained as first come, first served, and asked whether the current policy limited groups to those in the city.

Councilor O'Connell asked that the groups be limited to those in the city and questioned whether it is possible to weigh whether other fundraising efforts undertaken by the groups would be sufficient to award a street drive slot. He also noted that small groups rely heavily on the street drives.

Councilor Dowdle said that if groups knew the award of slots was tentative, then they might be provoked to seek other avenues of fundraising.

Councilor Kelly noted that the street drives are popular and effective and suggested the number might be doubled.

Councilor Armstrong answered that the Council would have to look at the calendar to see how the slots are scheduled.

Councilor Kasper responded that the street drives are not completely popular and that adding more slots could lead to a saturation point that might frustrate motorists. Councilor Armstrong agreed.

Councilor O'Connell remarked that the policy should be left as is.

Mayor Pro Tem Armstrong asked for the consensus of the Council, which was to leave the policy alone.

No action was taken and no recommendation was sent to the Council for formal action on the street drive policy.

Community Development:

Amy Bonn began the discussion on community development by listing the priorities that the Councilors have for development as indicated in the online survey she administered to them. Some of what the councilors are looking for:

- Definition of community development,
- Ways to involve the community, specific tasks that we can engage in for development,
- A commitment to planning,
- And a clearly designated office for community development.

Ms. Bonn distributed the results of the survey as well as other information about definitions of community development and strategies for collecting input.

A general discussion ensued that focused primarily on how to solicit feedback from the community, with suggestions to administer surveys that could be available online and included in city mailings for those without Internet access. There was talk of resource assessment and how to determine what we have and don't, and what we need, and discussion of the availability of grants for City development projects.

There was also discussion involving the city engineer as to the need for a comprehensive plan. Kevin Farrington reported that he has a \$36,000 grant to be used for the creation of a vision statement, and that a firm could be hired to develop a comprehensive plan – the cost could minimally be \$100,000. When asked why the cost was so high, he responded that certain terms could be negotiated to bring that cost down. He also noted that a comprehensive plan was funded in 1998 and never adopted by the Council. Several councilors expressed dismay over the possible cost of outsourcing a City plan. Amy Bonn indicated that grant agencies look for such a plan in reviewing grant proposals.

There was also discussion of the vacant Office for Community Development, with a number of councilors voicing their interest in staffing it. Carole Garcia, Deputy City Chamberlain, was asked about her perspective as a former staff member of that office and she responded that the office was important piece of the City's development efforts.

No action was taken and no recommendation was sent to the Council for formal action on community development.